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Chapter II

WHILE THE RIVER WAS HIGH

I

501 313 NOW this was a busy time of the year, and the river so full of canoes that a man floating down a lumber raft to the railhead might expect to meet ten or twelve dugouts in a day.

221 Men in laden corials were returning from the French side for the harvest festivals. They had been away eighteen months or longer, and now they were coming back to burn new rice and cassava fields for their women, and to beget new children. When the harvesting was done was a fine time for love, and a woman with a child in her womb was the very luckiest for planting a field. These returning men, in the prime of life, with powerful bodies and muscles that were as so many great snakes coiling and uncoiling underneath the gleaming moist skins were deferential toward strangers. For it would have been unseemly to thrust at the first comer their adventures on the Marowyne River, and a man who was returning with many possessions had to exercise particular care that he angered neither men nor gods. Yet among themselves they could not keep from a certain amount of swagger.

"Ai ba! Ai mati!" they exclaimed to each other in reply to the most casual comment. "Indeed, brother! Yes, friend!" This was no more than the mode of address of the [576] Awka people who live along the Marowyne, but "Ai ba! Ai mati!" stood for the password of the larger outside

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888 young. Once she, too, had liked to have her calf look round and full.

[437] [476] "Will you exchange this bottle of palm oil for tobacco?" she asked, showing her empty clay pipe.

She came in, saying she would like to rest, and began unfastening her top tunic so that she might make a pad of it on which to sit down on the ground, for the earth spirits [784] forbid women who had reached puberty to sit upon the bare earth. In her second tunic, somewhat fresher than the top one, she stood hesitating, looking about her for a place to sit down, until we brought her a carved stool we had bought the day before. Instead of putting on the top pangi again, she used it to cover her knees.

• [576] "*Bak'a muye,*" she said, "white woman, you ought to cover your knees, too, when you sit."

And sitting there, examining us and our belongings, she muttered her comments about our appearance and dress as she smoked, and muttering she swayed slightly, until the swaying rhythm seemed to bring a melody into her head, and she began to sing.

[533] "*The American Bak'a*
Have come from far,
American koni
Has brought them
To the Saramàcca River,
To the Saramacca people;
They must not sicken
They must not die."

While the men on the shore talked and called upon their gods to keep them free, the woman rocked and sang this invocation for our safety, forgetting for the moment that we were whites, whom the ancestors hated.

"You have so much wealth," she said to the white man, looking about her at our provision boxes, "you must have many wives."

And back again she went to her song, repeating the words over and over, until seeing people approach she rose slowly and went back to the river where her rice was drying.

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got for the timber he and his great-grandfather had floated down the river, he had two fine cloths. One was older and was intended for visiting the villages on the way, and the new one was for the Granman's village. For this occasion, too, he was saving a pair of newly woven garters, though he would wear the two strands of small coral and yellow beads in some of the villages on the way. At Lamé, for instance.

Ai-yo! He would see to it that he looked well at Lamé, for Lamé had handsome women, and at Lamé the women knew how to love. His own powerful love obia had come from Lamé, and there it was in his canister and there beside it was a potent fighting obia which his uncle, who was surpassed by few on the river in the strength of his obia spirits, had made for him. Some day, when Bayo was older, he, too, would know all these secrets, for his uncle had given him some of his gods, and at dances he already showed that he had a strong spirit. Until that time came, he had the obia from Lamé to win for him the love of his fellow men, and should it not avail against the magic of some surly fellow who wished him ill, then he had the other which would serve him in trouble. And on his upper arm was his Kromanti obia—the magically potent iron band—which, by tightening, would warn him when trouble was impending. That was the way to go through life—a man asked the gods to help him meet whatever might come, the good spirits with good, and the bad with yet greater evil.

Up above, whirling past him in the pale dawn, the parrots flew, making a screeching chorus in the stillness, and rousing him to the murmur of the next rapids which he was approaching.

What was that? A boat. Going downstream, he was soon alongside it.

"*Tio*, greetings," he called to the man, speaking in the subdued ceremonial voice.

"Thank you, tio," answered the older man, for he addressed a stranger.

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484 And after they had inquired of each other's health, they
• 576 were well past each other, making in opposite directions,
521 but continuing their colloquy.

Bayo said, "I am on my way to the Bakra's camp. I am to be one of his paddlers. Today we start up the river. He is going to the Granman's country."

"I am going to Tunkahai. My sister's son died on the Marowyne. His wife is to come out of mourning. We shall have good dancing tonight."

Bayo's boat was disappearing in the bend of the river.

"Adiosi, adiosi-o. Adiosi, adiosi-o!" he sang out his goodbye, pitching his voice so low and so well that it seemed to penetrate not only the entire river, but the very thickness of the forest which hemmed it in. The response came back to him as a faint, cadenced song.

"Ooo oo oo . . . oo!" he sang out, placing his hands against his mouth to make the sound carry. And the answering call came back true as a bird's call.

484 Now he was in the rapids again, and stood at the stern with dilated nostrils and head thrown forward. When he was through the whirling eddies and in quieter water once more, he adjusted his loin cloth carefully and sat down and
[137] began paddling. The green-heart trees were beginning to bloom. Fine trees. They belonged to another clan. He and his great-grandfather went for their timber below. There was plenty of timber in this bush of theirs. The gods of the bush were strong, and the ancestors had done well for the country. In a week these channels would be gone. Right about him everywhere jagged rocks would show. In a week, or before then, they would play the drums for the gods of the river, sounding their call to the sun to come and dry and warm them, and the sun, hearing the call, would send his fire to the river banks, and the rains would end.

Was that a boat overtaking him? The cool of the morning was a time to be about. Who was that?

"Tio, greetings," he said to the man, who seemed in a
[576] great hurry.

"Thank you, tio. . . . "

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recognized the coat of a village chief, and by the size of the boat he knew that it belonged to the upper river, far, far beyond the stretches he had yet penetrated.

He spoke the greeting in the faintest of whispers, out of deference to a man of age and rank, and stopped his boat, for this village belonged to his own clan, and it was here that he would get from his mother's sister the cassava bread which she had got ready for his journey up river. He got out of his boat gently; decorum demanded that he subdue his energy before the man of position. His palms rested on his knees for an instant, as he stood slightly inclined before the older man, and what questions he answered, he did in speech which was punctuated with the ceremonial stammering demanded by the occasion. He had put his toga-like cloth over him and stood hesitating whether or not to take his paddle to the village with him, for he was so well known here that this settlement was almost as familiar to him as his own. But at last he leaned down and took up his paddle. This mature formality, in a village where he was still often looked upon as a boy, was prompted perhaps by this meeting with the chief, or by the new feeling of confidence he had, since he was taking the Bakra's boat up the river. But here he was, going up the embankment with the firm, slow step of the stranger.

The old chief had already started, having first made his sacrifice of rum to the spirit of his boat by squirting it over the finely carved head which appeared in relief on the prow. And now, as he guided his canoe with the sure strokes of his large steering paddle, he sang his prayer.

"*Kediamo, Kediampon,*
Mother of the River,
Sacred ancestors, and my a'ka,
I am taking this journey down the river,
I am going to the city,
Grant that I travel in safety,
Grant that the trip be joyous,
Grant that I meet with friends,

Seeing him, our host gave an exclamation of pleasure. "But this is Ajako, the husband of Granman Yankuso's daughter!"

"*Kuma, Bakra. Kuma, Bakra waye*—Good morning, white man, good morning, white woman," he said, and our answer was, "*Ajako, kuma*—Ajako, good morning."

Had we awakened, no? This, in the Saramacca idiom, was how one asked if we were well, if we were alive, since the euphemism for death is sleep. We answered him in their patterned phrase.

"*Hafu so*," we said, using their equivalent for fairly well, only half so.

Ajako laughed. The white man had learned. "Are you no better? I hear the gods like you well," he replied.

And so the conversation went on, each giving account of himself.

Finally Ajako said, "Granman Yankuso waits for you, Bakra. He sends you his greetings, and says he will welcome you in Asindopo Lantiwe, his village. You have the freedom of the river. The village chiefs know of your coming. They will receive you. The river is not too high now, for top-side the rains are at an end. Here on the lower river, too, rocks that today are under water will appear tomorrow or the next day. The water is not too high now. The Granman sends word to you that you can start."

But what of him? Would he not come with us as our chief paddler, to show us the way through the many channels? But he smiled and said he was going to the Marowyne. He could not turn back, he told us, for he had the boats to sell, and money to earn there, while his wife was nursing her infant. When the child was seventeen, eighteen months old, then he would be back with his wife again, cutting new fields for her, and making children. While the infant was at the breast, he would be away working.

There was more talk, leading gently—*safri*, softly, as the Bush Negro himself says—to the subject of certain unfriendly villages. There were two of them up the river that

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looking out on the river. Whether it was a gesture that he would sing no more, or not, we could not say, but when he turned again to us he looked thoughtful. "White man, how far away is Africa? Would they kill me if I went there? Could I get a woman, if I went there?"

We sent him some food to his boat as an expression of hospitality, and word came back that when we had done eating, he would himself come and thank us. When he did come, it was to speak his thanks and to say goodbye, and he did not come alone. With him was the young man who was his traveling companion, and this young man carried gifts to us. Bayo, who had arrived a short time before, received the gifts of fig bananas and rice for us, as was the custom of these people, for to have given or received a gift in person would have been the way of a boor, just as it would have been bad form to stand about and watch us eat.

The leave-taking ritual, as that of greeting, is as formalized as a litany and almost as solemn.

"*Adiasi, adiasio—waka bon, yere. Tan bon*—Goodbye, travel well, hear? Keep well." Ajako carefully laid away his top cloth in his woven closed basket, straightened his loin cloth, and paddled away briskly from the landing.

Later, boats pulled up bringing the Gankwe men.

"Sedefo, we have a fine boat for you. It's large, and it will take a great deal of load. It's a new boat, just come down from top-side."

The men busied themselves with bringing our provisions from the shelter to the landing place so that the loading might begin. A tent had been made of palm leaves for the boat in which we ourselves were traveling, so that we might be shielded from the glare of the open river, from sunstroke and the sudden tropical downpours, and the men decided to load this boat first.

Now there was a murmur among the Gankwe men. Sedefo was passing his hands over the new boat, as though it were a human form, touching its "head," running his hands over the "ribs," the "belly." Then he balanced himself in it, and shook his head.

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too deep for the pole-stick. When we go in the center, it is slow. . . . We go [illegible] across!" the shouted in his shrill voice, as our boat and the others after us veered over to the other side of the stream where the current was less strong.

"How do you know just where these places are?" we asked. "There are so many channels, so many islands. How can you tell?"

"*Ma, kye!* What would you? I belong to this bush. An old man knows his river."

Steadily the boats went ahead in this long, quiet stretch. For fully half an hour the men worked in silence, doggedly going upstream close to the bank, until under the shade of a tree they saw a boat resting.

"Tio, odi! Tio, odi!" Each of our men addressed the two in the boat.

"Tangi, tio! Tio, odi," they answered each one, until finally they said, "Odi, Bak'a," greeting the stranger last, as was the custom.

Our men explained, "We are going to the Saramacca country, up the river to the Granman. We are carrying the Bakra to the Granman. They belong to America country. They traveled in a fire ship for twenty-one nights and days to come to the Saramacca. Twenty-one nights and days, mati, without resting. *G'an sundyi*—A great state of affairs."

The man said, "We come from the Marowyne. The river is high. The next rapids are difficult. Let us travel together."

And so we were five canoes. Ahead, we could already hear the dull murmur which would soon crescendo to the final roar. This was the water pouring over the first rocks in the distance.

"What rapids are these?"

"We must not talk about this here. Wait until we pass them. If we speak the name, the spirit will come, and he will be angry. The boat might go over. We might lose part of our load."

Now we came closer to the line of white, which rose higher and higher. Except for the bits of white foam like

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[illegible] over the shrines to the ancestors and gods. All about rose the many houses of the Granman with the elaborately carved posts figuring his emblem. Under the shade trees the widow was pounding rice. She wore old clothes, and, since she would soon be out of mourning, they were almost in rags. The mourning band about her hair was also old.

The Granman's eyes must have followed ours, must have seen us study the outlines of the carving, and must have followed us to the shrines and the woman, for his voice changed, and now he repeated in a ruminating voice, "Yes, here we believe in kunu."

"Ya-hai!" was the noncommittal reply from his listeners.

The Granman looked now into the faces of his trusted chiefs. He looked steadily and long, searching in the semidarkness of the house for a betraying expression, as the chiefs sat on the low stools against the farther wall, their faces averted, as was seemly.

"Well, friends, kunu has made an end of my family. Is it not so? But the clan will go on. The clan's rule is not ended. Up and down the river tell them that, friends. Kunu has brought my family to an end. With me our family rule is finished. That is right. But the clan will go on."

The customary interpolations followed each phrase. Then singly the chiefs took their leave. Rising slowly, after they had received permission to depart, and with body bent, their hands touching their knees, each spoke his farewell.

In the light their ceremonially anointed bodies glistened like polished ebony. Swift and straight each made his way down the clearing and into a side path which led to the river, where the boats were fastened.

"Fine men, these," said the Granman to us after a silence. "And you, have you kunu in your country? . . . "

5

But even after these and many more instances of kunu had come to us, and even though we had snatched a few sentences of explanation from one man and from another, the essential nature of kunu still eluded us. Was kunu, then,

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get the tchina which, if we do not break them, will let us stay healthy. Both our parents care for us."

He thought for a moment, and then, with a laugh, he wondered as Awingu had wondered that early morning at the planting ground.

"Is it not so in your country, Bak'a," he said, "that you ask me so often about these things?"

8

"Massa cow," we heard Bayo call out again and again to his great-grandfather Bibifo, when he wanted to indicate to the old man that he knew what he was about. Bibifo accepted the reproof with unvarying meekness and good humor.

This relationship between them puzzled us. Yet the other men, overhearing Bayo's brusque words to Bibifo, made nothing of it. Before strangers, Bayo was subdued, shy. He stuttered ceremonially when he addressed a man of rank. He pitched his voice only a little above a whisper when he was in a strange village. Toward Kasanya and Sedefo and Asikanu he was respectful, and showed reserve. When he wanted his hair trimmed he came to Angita for help, or, better still, to the young man at the prow of Kasanya's boat who, like Kasanya, was of his own clan.

The old man was not a forceful fellow. That was, perhaps, the reason, we thought at first. Then we wondered if it was not because Bibifo had become Adrian, and no longer wore obias to carry him well on the water—because he had forsaken the old gods. But the other men treated Bibifo with the respect due an old man. When Kasanya killed a monkey, and his own pole-man could not share it with him because he was a twin and twins did not eat monkey, he turned to Bibifo with the pole-man's portion, and not to Sedefo, or to Asikanu, who was the brother of a clan head, and himself a possible successor to his brother's chieftainship.

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him. He has taken boats up and down the Marowyne. He is my grandson. If I had one of my own blood, I would have had him accompany you. . . . But my sisters' children sleep," he ended, using the euphemism for death.

When we came to know the young man, we asked him about this incident with the Granman. Was he not afraid to interrupt him?

"Ma kye! But he is my grandfather! With my grandfather I make sport."

Again we went to the old men and sought in village after village for their own explanation of this behavior toward grandparents.

There were, we learned, age distinctions that were deeply felt. A man was on easy terms with those of his own generation. Between parents and children, and those of the generation of their parents, however, there was a definite code of behavior. For example, no young man or woman might talk of sexual matters with either parent, and this lack of sanction for frankness in sexual discussions with parents became an actual taboo with parents-in-law. Encounters with the "pai" and "mai," as they were known, were hemmed in by countless prohibitions. A man might not sleep in the same house with either of them, nor might he eat with them out of the same dish. If he met either of his parents-in-law as he went along the path, he had to turn aside, make way for them, and cover his face. He might not pronounce their names, nor might they speak his. These observances held for women, too, and the ones we mention were by no means all.

With grandparents, however, a vastly different situation obtained.

"He is my grandson. I call him mati—friend. I make sport with him!"

"She is my granddaughter. She calls me husband. She makes free with me!"

"She is my granddaughter, we talk about everything. She calls me kambo, and I call her kambo." Again, we

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wash every day until Wednesday came to permit her to dance. When she washed with the sacred moistened clay, she rubbed the white on her children.

"Will all the women dance on Wednesday who have the same god as you?"

The child's mother shook her head. "If the god comes to them, yes. If he doesn't come, they can't dance."

And the bassia's wife said, "The women who are in the menstrual house can't dance. When they hear the drums, they are troubled, but they must remain quiet."

The woman had spoken too eagerly and too loudly, for her husband, overhearing her, said something in a low rapid voice, and at once the women fell silent and several of them remembered errands they had to see to.

4

"When men are in the council house, you mustn't interrupt," said the bassia's wife to the white woman. "If we did what you did just now, our husbands would scold us when they got home, and if we did it again, they would beat us."

She had taken upon herself all the prerogatives of friendship, and continually criticized the manners of her visitor.

The old were to be greeted last. A gift was to be received by another. When returning a piece of carving to another's hand, the carving should rest on the outstretched palm, while the elbow of that arm lay on the palm of the other hand. In the presence of men, a woman who took a stool should turn it about and sit on its narrower side.

"Never sit on the bare earth. The spirits don't like it," she said one instant, and the next, "Don't play with your fingers on top of your sun helmet. Your breasts will get long. Drumming is not a thing for women."

There had been other warnings during earlier visits to Bush Negro villages, but none had borne down so heavily upon the shortcomings of the stranger.

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798 799 The other white man was the Catholic missionary who for years had been living in the Gran Rio. He was a friend of the Saramacca people, and they liked him. Now this white man wanted to see Dahomey. He said that he, too, had a strong God who protected him. He asked so many times that they at last promised to take him there. But when he got to Pempeh he fell asleep, and he slept till . . . till they reached the Granman's country. So his life was saved. The gods, knowing that he was a friend of the Saramacca people, did not want to kill him. They put him to sleep until Dahomey was well out of reach.

"And this is what happened to you, Bak'a. The gods did not want to hurt you, so you did not see."

2

133 Past these rapids and another stretch of rough water, and then before us lay the highest falls of the Saramacca. To the right, over a ledge of rock spreading in an unbroken sweep across its entire width poured the Gran Rio, the [361] river up which lay the villages of the Loango clan, and beyond, the untrodden jungle which barricaded the way to the country of the Indians, and the basin of the Amazon. To the left was the final bit of fast water that remained between us and the village where the Granman awaited us. We were at last in the Pikien Rio.

Here the stream narrowed, and we could see on both banks the people who were waiting to see us pass. The [574] gay colors of the women's cloths were brilliant against the background of green, and their hallooing reached our ears above the rush of the water. A canoe with several young men came alongside.

"We are here to help you with your boats. We have been sent by the Granman. Fire three shots to let him know you are in the Pikien Rio."

516 We fired, and instantly there was an answering salute of [201] three guns. With the reinforcement of paddlers, it did not take long to reach the island which separated us from the landing place of Asindopo Lantiwe. Here all strangers

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stopped to change their clothes, and make themselves fit for the reception by the Granman.

We had been warned that these preparations were not to be slighted. Those who had been to the village of the Granman told many stories of the impressiveness of the ceremonial life, and the dignity of those who were there. It was the seat of government, the home of a potentate. A visitor, whether a village chief or a man from the city, had to keep in mind that he was to appear at court. Etiquette demanded that the traveler, once arrived at the island which now hid us from the Granman and his assembled villagers, debark, remove the stains of hard traveling, and dress in a manner befitting the reception which awaited him.

But the gods had planned otherwise.

At this time of the year, though the heavy rains were over and the showers were becoming less and less frequent, it did sometimes happen that the clouds gathered at midafternoon and rain fell. To the northeast, behind us, we had seen the clouds massing, and now they hung low and glowering.

"It will rain," Sedefo called to us, just as we were making ready to see to a change of clothes, and an instant later the storm broke. With a kind of hurricane force which sent the branches toward the earth, and flares of lightning and crashes of thunder, the deluge was upon us. Not since our first days in the bush had we coped with a rain like this. The water poured down as though some giant hands were turning over endless vessels. Our tent seemed to have been taken as unaware as we were, for having sheltered us in many hard storms, it was now inadequate to keep out the downpour. We drew our raincoats tighter about us to keep off the water which came through the thatch.

Under the trees of the island the Bush Negroes were huddled. Their favorite top cloths were still in their baskets, safe out of the wet under the white man's tarpaulins. No chance now to put them on, or to use the oil which they had jealously saved for making their faces and

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long wands of office, of black wood topped with silver knobs. About their necks were heavy silver chains, and from each chain was suspended a large silver crescent.

Another man stood near them to one side. He wore a long coat of white edged with scarlet and blue. He carried no stick, and wore no insignia. On his head, over a white kerchief wound tightly about the head and caught up in the back, was a white sun helmet. Above his head, held by one of the younger men who accompanied him, was an umbrella, the highest emblem of rank. It betokened that this man was Moana Yankuso, Granman of the Saramacca people.

3

Kasanya was first out of the boat when the dugouts were brought to shore, and after him came Bibifo. Sedefo and Asikanu remained with the younger men, waiting for the Granman to indicate that he wished to receive them. Only men of rank and elderly members of his own clan would go at this time to speak to the headman, who stood there watching the boats.

"We came, G'aman," we heard Kasanya say, "and we brought the Bak'a." Two or three low-voiced sentences followed, and then the conversation was terminated by the elderly functionary in the yellow coat, who came down to our boat.

"I greet you in the name of the G'aman, Bak'a," he announced. "The G'aman himself awaits you. Come with me."

As we stepped out of the boat, the hallooing of the women and the shouts of the children, which had stopped when the paddlers addressed the Granman, began once again, and, as an underlying voice, the salutes from the shotgun were to be heard. The old man, shifting his wand of office to his left hand, now carefully helped first the one, then the other out of the boat and, offering his arm to each in turn, led us to the top of the steep rise, until we were face to face with the Granman. It would have been unlucky had we lost our footing at this moment of welcome. This chieftain was

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574 there not only to tender the courtesy due the guests of the
576 tribal head, but to see that no such mishap occurred to
609 them.
643 When we had both gained the ascent, he turned to the Granman.

"Headman Yankuso, the Bak'a is before you."

As though just become aware of us, Yankuso fixed us with his eyes, fastening his glance on each in turn.

"Odi, white man. White woman, odi!"

A great figure of a man he was, as he stood there. Tall and massive of build, he towered over those who surrounded [291] him. Barefooted like the rest, there was that in his bearing which was the way of a man who was accustomed to obedience, whose word was final. He was pure Negro. His skin was dark. In his features there was no hint that the lineage of this ruler held any of the blood of the white masters, nor that his ancestors numbered among them Indians who had given way before his invading forbears. His face was impassive, yet underneath the outward immobility was an alertness which the glistening, oil-anointed skin made the more alive. His speech was measured, his words articulated with studied emphasis, which gave to each of them the value of a completed image.

"*Bari*—Cry out!" he called to the women in his vibrant voice. "Halloo, give the welcome of the bush to the people who came."

Amid the renewed cries which his command brought, we turned from the river bank and walked slowly up the path toward the village, past the silk-cotton tree, past the shrine to the ancestors, until we reached an open place on which fronted half a dozen thatched buildings.

"This is my house, white man," he said, pointing to it. "I will put you near me. I will put you in the council house."

4

344 The council house at Asindopo Lantiwe—the village of Asin, the seat of government—was unlike any we had seen.

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622 "It is the coat of a chief. All chiefs wear these coats
292 At the G'aman's we wear the best we have."

[293] We looked at his silver-topped wand of office. "Do all chiefs carry these?" we asked.

"Not every chief has a stick like mine. And all chiefs do not have one of these." He pointed to the crescent of silver which hung from a chain about his neck.

"It is beautiful."

"Ya-hai. And it's old."

Embossed on the silver plaque were the arms of Holland, richly worked.

622 "After the time of running away, when the fighting was
648 over between our ancestors and the whites, these were given
293 to us, and the wands of office. But not all chiefs have their
643 wands from the white man. Some have the ones we call 'free sticks.' A man who has a 'free stick' is not a chief for the white man, but we know that he is a chief."

He added that the whites had made an agreement with the escaped Negroes that if they would no longer raid the plantations and carry away slaves with them they would be considered free men in their bush, under the white man's government. Since that time the Bush Negro Granman and certain of the village chiefs had had official recognition, and as a token of this each of them had been given a uniform, a [292] high hat, a crescent with the arms of Holland worked on it, a silver-headed staff, and an annual stipend.

"The chiefs who have 'free sticks,' the white man does not pay."

576 As we spoke of these things, we were interrupted from time to time by the noiseless brushing aside of the cloth which hung above the door, and the entrance of one of our men, or a man of the Granman's village, who brought in our canisters and hammocks. With not even a glance in our direction, they would leave as noiselessly and return to the river. Through the slatted side walls we could hear the sounds of such activity as we had not thought possible in the tropics.

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AT THE COURT OF THE GRANMAN

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Outside the doorway we heard a decisive clearing of the throat, louder than the coughs we had already learned to associate with the approach of a visitor. After a short pause, the Granman's bulk filled the low entrance, and with him came the elder in the yellow coat, followed by Sungi of Dahomey, the chief who had come to pilot us to the village of the Granman, and the bassia from S'ei.

The men stood with ceremonially inclined bodies until the Granman was settled in his chair, then each in turn took a bench from the shelf above the door, and still with body bent found a place for it against the wall facing the Granman.

After a silence, the Granman spoke.

"The unloading is done. I have set aside five houses for the Bak'a. Mati—friends—the white G'aman told me about this visit when I was in the white man's city. Others have told me. People who come to me must be cared for. The white people are come. They sit among you. The Bak'a and his woman will put up their hammocks here. Here they will stay. The white man's goods are stored in the house in back of mine. The white man has much goods. There is a man from the city who helps them. He will sleep where these goods are stored. So I speak. That is my wish."

"Ya-hai, G'aman," came the assent from And'u.

"Kelele," said the chief in the yellow coat.

"The house in back of this I have had the women get ready also for the white man and his woman. When the chiefs gather for councils, and they want to be alone, the whites must have a place to go aside. I have given a house for the cook, and an open house for the cooking. So it is. People who come to me must be cared for."

"True, true!"

"So it is."

"Kodo!"

"White man," said the Granman, for the first time turning to us, "you have heard?"

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For a few moments there was a rapid interchange between him and the old man in the yellow coat.

"The down-river men who have brought the white man," the Granman continued his cadenced speech, "will be housed in the village. The four Gankwe men will put up their hammocks in one house. The other four will be put up in my quarter. So it is. So I care. . . . "

"Yes, wise man."

"Gbolo!"

The ceremonial introductions followed, and each chief was praised for his special services to the Granman. The man in the yellow coat was of the Oyo people, a son of a great line, held high in the esteem of men and gods. Sungi was a man who knew much of the white man's wisdom. He had been to the French shore, and knew the French tongue, he knew about white man's medicine, but, friends, he was a child of the bush! And'u was a beloved chief, an honest man, a man to send on missions of trust. The bassia was a clever man, one of the men of And'u's village. The gods loved him, for what his hands touched turned to wealth. He was a good man. He was a friend.

A low cough was heard outside. Slowly the cloth was raised, and crouching into the hut came Kasanya and Bibifo. They were carefully dressed, and each wore a kerchief drawn tightly about his head. These they wore by right of age.

The bassia, lowest in rank, was greeted first, and then each chief in his turn, until the Granman was reached.

"Greetings, G'aman."

"Thank you, friends," came the vibrant answer.

This began the colloquy of inquiry about each other's well-being, which here at court had a longer ritual than anywhere on the river. It was a prelude of measured song which introduced all speech between strangers. Bibifo began timidly and did not show himself equal to the many variations which Kasanya had introduced with ease.

"Friends, I am glad you came. You must tell me what is happening in your villages."

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AT THE COURT OF THE GRANMAN

Now it was the Granman's turn to supply the interpolations, while Kasanya and Bibifo reported.

"Yes, so it is. So I know it to be myself. So I have heard," he spoke when they paused.

But when the ceremonial greetings were over, and the conversation turned to down-river affairs, the Granman leaned forward in his chair and talked with the men informally. They were all clan members, or men belonging to clans whose allegiance to the Granman's rule was undoubted, and they talked over many things in the way men do when they meet with their own kind.

The room was growing darker. Yankuso called through the slatted wall against which he was leaning, and the young man who had fired the guns entered.

"Bassia, it is getting late. We must leave this house to the white man. These men with me are my friends. They must drink before they leave."

The bassia took the decanter from the table, and from the shelf underneath it, where we could dimly see shells and containers of shot, he took several small glasses. Before taking the glass to his lips, each man poured some of the liquor on the ground as a libation to the Earth Mother, and, as each drank, he turned to Yankuso and asked if he might leave.

"*Mi da permissi*—I grant you permission," he said to each.

When we had finished our meal, it was already dark. At the door of his own house, Granman Yankuso was sitting on a low stool.

"I have something for you," he said, disappearing inside his house. When he came out, he held in his hand some black object, which we were unable to identify. "You have fire?" he asked, as he suspended this object from a tree which grew between his house and the one in which we were staying.

"There was a white Hollander here who brought this to me. He went from here farther into the bush. He never came out. Light is a good thing at night. When visitors

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pieces of red and blue cloth worked with this thread, so that again the white vertebrae showed. Bayo and Angita wore their beads, and each had a garter below the knee of the right leg. Their garters were white in color, but of a whiteness which only new, unwashed cotton has. They were about an inch and a half wide and were so tight that the muscle of the calf bulged prominently. On their upper arms were Kromanti rings of iron which, by contracting, warned the men of impending danger. In addition, Sedefo and Angita wore the bell obia of the Gankwe people, and Bayo his love obia which had come from Lamé.

"When do you go, Sedefo?"

"When the G'aman speaks. When we finish a piece of work, then we do not want to be paid at once. We do not leave at once. It would be as if we had not gone together in pleasure and wanted to be away as soon as possible. With the white man it is one thing. In the bush we do not do it so. Here in the G'aman's village, we do as we do with our own people in the bush," he paused for an instant, and looked about toward the clearing outside the palings. "There is another thing. In the G'aman's village, men cannot leave until the G'aman gives permission. When the G'aman is ready, he will call us. We will speak together. Then we will speak with him again. Then we will ask to go."

Bayo had been looking about the council house with an interest which was not unmixed with awe at the Granman's possessions, and he spoke in whispers.

"Ai, when the G'aman gives permission, then we go."

As he spoke, the cloth over the doorway was gently thrust aside. Bassia Anaisi of the Granman's village entered. He was the man who had fired the saluting gun the day of our arrival and who had at the Granman's call come to serve the visiting chiefs with rum. He now greeted each in turn but did not take down a bench. For a moment he stood there, head lowered out of deference to the character of the place where he was, then he coughed slightly and, turning to us, said, "The G'aman is ready for you. The chiefs are here."

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623 643 [291] Our paddlers rose at once and left the council house. A moment later And'u entered, followed by a group of elders with closely drawn kerchiefs covering their heads. Among these only Kasanya and Bibifo were known to us. Kasanya brought his bench close to ours and moved it yet closer, with a gesture of the head that he wanted to continue the intimacy of our ten days' journey together.

"White man," he said, leaning over and whispering, "call your man from the city. At a krutu a man has someone to speak for him. So we do here."

576 623 643 And so, we soon saw, it was. Address in the council of the Saramacca people was always by indirection. If the Granman wished to speak to one of his chiefs, then he gave his message through another chief, though the man for whom the words were intended might be closer to him or more clearly in view.

643 623 [292] 302 291 Others came in, until the room was half filled when the Granman entered. Today he wore a printed red and black loose coat of knee length, and over it the ceremonial cloth worn by men here in the bush, so that where other men's bare shoulders showed was the sleeve of his coat. On his head were both kerchief and sun helmet. The men were anointed with oil, and many of them wore the jaguar's tooth obia. The last to enter was a man who was well past middle age, and he was followed by the young *obiaman* from S'ei. Both of these men wore the cloths required of men when not at work, but they were not so uncreased, or so new. Nor were their bodies bright with oil. The older man had several broad stripes of white clay from wrist to shoulder of his right arm, and from knee to pelvis on the inner left thigh. Slung from one shoulder and reaching across to the opposite thigh was a white obia made of native fiber, and on his neck were several others. To these [289] obias were added iron bands on his arms, while below his right knee and at the ankle of his right foot were other obias made of fiber and twisted black thread.

623 The men we knew greeted us as they took down their benches and found places against the wall farthest from the

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609 the Bak'a himself tell why he has come the long way to the
603 Saramacca river and what it is he seeks."
123 There was a general chorus of agreement, and silence awaited our accounting.

As the town man began to repeat our words to the Granman, the quiet of the house was heightened by an occasional stirring outside the paling. From where we sat, we could see brown motionless feet, which told us that there were many more than those inside, who were listening to the white man's reason for being in the bush.

Again the Granman made the traditional responses.

"So it is, white man."

"True, what you have said, bassia."

Finally our telling was at an end. Again there was a silence as we sat, tensely waiting.

The Granman again broke the silence.

"Friends, chiefs, you have heard. The white man is here. He comes to learn of our life. The gods of the river have
[706] brought him and his woman safely. The Great God sent the
821 rain to cool the air when he reached Asindopo Lantiwe.
[823] The gods are more than I am. The river is more than I am. But the Saramacca people are also more than I am. It is you, headmen of the Saramacca people, who must speak."

"Ai, G'aman," said the man who had the stripes of white on him and who wore the many obias. "But have the ancestors spoken?"

"Truly you ask, friend," was the response. "It is well that you think of these things. In the bush, we think before we speak. Do you go aside and consider well."

Slowly the members of the krutu arose from their
[576] benches. Softly, with bent form, each passed out of the doorway. We were alone with the Granman, who waited with us for the reply of the chiefs.

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623 As the elders slowly filed out of the council house, it was
693 as though a jury were leaving the courtroom to decide a case which had been laid before it. And as we learned more,

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"It hurts, doesn't it?"

"*Ma kye!* It is beautiful. The men like it too much," said the girls in a chorus, laughing at the suggestion that the pain of the cuts would deter them from having them made.

Sometimes, of course, the older girl admitted, the wounds did become ugly. There was the girl from Godo, whose suitor had kept bringing her more gifts because she was growing handsomer and handsomer. She was all but ready for marrying, when one of her thighs became infected after the cuts. The wounds were so ugly that she could not even wear the tunics of the grown girl. The family was sacrificing to all the spirits of the earth, begging them to heal the wounds.

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These days there were many visitors in the Granman's village. There was the girl the Granman had summoned to dance for his guests. She had, perhaps, that very summer got her cloths, and her reputation as the best dancer on the river had won for her a suitor who gave her many armlets and anklets. Her voice was fresh and flutelike in quality, and so fine that when she sang she placed a folded cloth over her mouth, or danced with her head low. This was the way of modesty before people, and humility before the gods.

The women said, "Her spirits dance well," when they watched her.

There was the large girl from a village down river who came almost daily. She had the body of a woman, yet she went about unclothed, and sometimes she appeared only with a string about her waist.

"She is ready for *pangi*—cloths—ai," the women said, "but her people do not want to give them to her yet."

They would not explain, however, why the attire of a grown woman was denied her. We could only conjecture about it. Perhaps she had no suitor. The man to whom she had been promised might have died. There might be other reasons.

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fine, sat between Sedefo, whose bench was moved forward a little, and Angita. The younger men sat with bodies half-turned toward the wall, out of respect for the Granman, the older ones, with their faces averted from him.

The Granman was speaking, telling a story.

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"Ai, mati . . . " he said, in his precise, formal way, laying stress on each syllable, "in our bush, the gods be praised, men are men. There was a man near here, who saw a woman he liked, and he took her. He had a loving eye, he was young. Ai, mati, what is a beating to a man when he is young? But the proverb says, 'All that is in the darkness will come to light.' Dealings with women always come to light too soon. That man got a beating, mati! He came out into the clearing, his head held high, like any man whom young girls follow with their eyes. But waiting for him was the husband of the woman, and the men of his family, and. . . . "

"Well, so it is, G'ama'," said Sedefo, with the careful modulation which showed that he, too, was schooled in the way of the important councils.

"Ya-hai, G'ama'," said Asikanu, more briefly.

Granman Yankuso now went on with his story, bringing to his recital all the detail of the punishment of the adulterer, without quickening the telling of his story even when he spoke the words which described the sound of the blows.

"Yes, master of the realm," said Sedefo, his head still averted, but leaning his body forward a little as he spoke, so that he somewhat shielded Asikanu from the direct gaze of the Granman, yet managing this clever gesture so that it had the air of rapt interest.

"Kere-kere, G'ama'," Asikanu breathed, almost inaudibly.

As the Granman recounted his tale, Asikanu's spine twitched as though every blow mentioned was that instant being leveled at him, as though he himself were lying head down in the dust of the clearing, while blows rained down upon him, and the Kromanti iron bands cut gashes into his proud face and arms and body.

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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happened to cover a fraction of the Djuka territory, so familiar to Dr. Kahn.

We lived for a time at the Djuka village of Moengo Tappo, and from there visited other villages on neighbouring rivers and creeks. And there I felt again the sharp contrast between the primitive and the civilized. Through the Djukas, I saw civilization in perspective; and especially I saw that tragic phase of it which passes through prison gates.

Djuka life makes us stop to think all over again about everything. It makes us see what we have gained, as well as what we have lost.

There is, for example, no nonsense about white superiority among the Djukas. They are proud to the point of savage arrogance. Hatred and distrust of the white man are as much a part of their inheritance as is their jungle lore. As among the Negroes of Haiti, you must win your way. But when you are finally accepted, not as a superior being, but as an equal, then how warm and charming a thing their friendship is!

The Djuka farewell to us is a beautiful memory. As we passed down the river, between walls of forest where orchids were in gorgeous blossom, the Djuka villagers came down to the water's edge to say good-bye, raising their hands high and bowing low to bring down blessings upon us.

Indirectly it was these Djukas who introduced me to Dr. Kahn. At the time that we were in the Guiana forest Dr. Kahn was in another part of the same jungle, though neither of us knew of the presence or the existence of the other. Later, after our return to New York, our common interest in the

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have a tribal language called *odo, deepee-tal'kee,* or *Saramaccatongo* known only among themselves; they are members of the Saramaccaner tribe.

Before the other corial is out of earshot, the Djukas bid us good-bye with the familiar words: *"Wakka bon na watra, bakkra!" "Gran danke, mama"*—"Many thanks, my uncle," we respond, adding the *o* sound to the last word to make it carry over the waves, as they do. To them "uncle" is the most respectful appellation that can be used, similar to our respectful use of the word "father." For them a maternal uncle is more important than a father.

For a while now the poling continues in silence. Further on we pass a lone Djuka on the bank, skilfully setting a fish trap constructed of sticks and *liawar.* Far away upstream can be heard the muffled report of a shotgun; some black hunter is bringing in game. The angry currents slap constantly against the side of the corial. We round another bend and see ahead only more rapids, where rocks make innumerable white ripples in the muddy water.

A stop is made for lunch at one of the many islands. Bundle brings out canned food and the gipsy pot. The river looks enticing and cool. The bahkra begins taking off his clothes for a swim in the water near shore. The Negroes are abashed at his nakedness, and Bundle tactfully advises him to be more modest.

The waters in this part of the great South American rain forest are infested with the Brazilian piranha or piraya (*Serrasalmo sp.*), a species of carnivorous fish. They are small,

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river floods periodically, and might wipe them out if they were too near, and that the Bush Negro still retains, back in his mind, a strong fear of another war with the white man. In the latter event the Djuka villages would have to be camouflaged or hidden. Often, too, the villages are to be found just above a waterfall or rapids, as another hindrance to possible invaders.

At the landing we see bare-breasted Djuka women washing clothes or bathing their children. They do not evince much curiosity as we paddle up, for it is considered insolent to stare. The naked little ones are very much afraid of the white man. They scurry into the underbrush and watch us from behind trees. The older children remain and are proud of their courage. An old man is making a canoe. Most of the men are away on hunting or lumbering expeditions.

Leading up to the village is a winding path, cut by the violent rain until it resembles a ravine. Sometimes the river floods the path, forming a little muddy inlet into which the canoes stick their noses. One town is perched on a high bank, reached only by a hardwood ladder twenty-five feet tall. The blacks clamber up easily, unlike the awkward white man, who has difficulty with the missing steps.

We ascend the path; the frightened children return to their play, paddling about or fishing from the moored canoes. Sometimes the bahkra's coming has been announced beforehand by a system of drum telegraphy. A certain rhythm beaten on the tomtom informs the adjacent villages that white men are coming up the river, and why. In this way

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their arrival is frequently anticipated. But it is something of an exaggeration to say that this primitive telegraphy is so extensive and efficient as to spread news of the white man over "more than two thousand square miles of impassable land." Nothing of the sort happens. The sound of the drums will carry for about two or three miles, when the wind is in the right direction, and the drum call is relayed from town to town. Most often, however, they are not beaten at all for us, and we arrive unannounced.

At the landing we are met by Captain Abaisa, a splendidly built Djuka whose friendship was obtained on a previous trip. His powerful body is all cut up with ornamental scars, a form of personal decoration highly esteemed by the Bush Negroes. The custom is a direct heritage from West Africa, found in many parts of the Gold Coast, the Congo country, and Cameroons, but unknown among the Indians of the Guianas. Abaisa greets us cordially: *"You wicki bah?" "E-e ah, matti"* is the proper reply. This talkee-talkee greeting, the equivalent of "Did you wake well?" is chanted rather than spoken. The voice ascends sharply on the second word, the final word being drawn out in a high sustained tone. The reply means "Yes, friend."

Another form of greeting is *"Ah broko baka,"* or "The day breaks again"—in other words—we meet again; or *"Neetee kaba"*—"The night is finished."

If a person is met for the second time within a short interval, the proper thing to say is *"We meetee baka."* Still another greeting is *"Bala, (Sis, Da, Ma) odio, how fa you de*

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576 *beh?*" In other words, "Brother, (Sister, Father, Mother) howdy, how-do-you-do?"

751 776 There is a ceremony connected with the simple act of entering a Bush Negro town. A stranger might bring in foul intentions or evil spirits. The village must be protected against this horrific possibility, so nearly every path leading to the town has a magic device, known as an *azang pau*, to keep the spirits out. It consists of a dry stick across the path overhead, to which palm fronds are lashed. They hang down, brushing over everyone who passes beneath. The visitor passes under the azang pau, and is cleared of evil spirits that might harm the inhabitants of the village.

776 The Djukas have invisible enemies. On either side of the path, near the palm barrier, is the wooden statue of a fetish to provide protection from these enemies. The fetish named Cromanti, on one side, protects the village from the evil spirit that dwells in the silk-cotton tree, the *coo coo dree*. Opposite him stands *Aflamu*, who secures the village against the attacks of a mighty tribe of unseen men, who are the sworn enemies of the Bush Negro and kill him with invisible arrows.

Walking up from the river we reach the barrier, and pause before it for the customary ritual. But Abaisa is a potent chief, the head of his *lo* or clan, the *Abaisa-lo*. So long as the bahkra accompanies him, no ceremony is necessary. We enter unchallenged into the clearing beyond.

648 576 The usual procedure is for the white man to hang back and let his paddler precede him. Moi-Man gains admittance to re-

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
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mote villages in this way; carrying his paddle before him, as a symbol of voyaging, he approaches the barrier or *azang pau*, halts before it, and clears his throat loudly. The rest remain some thirty feet behind. Someone comes out of the huts and inquires what is wanted.

One of the objects of the expedition being the acquisition of specimens of Bush Negro art objects, this is usually explained at the very beginning to prevent any misunderstanding. The following dialogue is typical:

"*Bakkra wanny timbeh* (or *sanni*)"—"White man wants wood carvings."

Cannily, the black replies: "*Me no habbe fu selli*"—"I don't have any to sell."

Moi-Man, accepting this verdict, explains further: "*Bakkra wanny luku, wan pekein*"—"White man wants to look around, wants to see inside a bit."

"*Ah bon*," the Negro replies, meaning: "It's good." He returns to his hut.

The parley formally concluded, the paddler turns around and motions us to come up the trail into the village. The towns usually consist of a clearing a few hundred feet across, beyond which is the overhanging green wall of trees. Scattered about the clearing in no particular order are numerous huts, with an occasional palm or breadfruit tree beside them. The rest of the concourse is bare clay. Sometimes there is a flower garden in the centre. Here and there are tiny *God houses*, where the fetishes stand.

The villages vary greatly in size. Some, like Gansee, near

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have a last look at the child's penis, as they will never see it again. Then the boy is proclaimed a man, and given clothes.

So far as could be observed, there is no circumcision of either the male or female, although such mutilations are indulged in by West African tribes in the region from which the Djukas came. The girls wear only the *coyo*, or a larger cloth known as *pangi*, until their first menstruation, when their mothers give them cloths. This is done in private. Menstruating women are required to leave their homes and retire to a separate hut situated outside the village on a by-path; they may not return until three days after the period is over. Under no condition are they allowed to go to the provision fields during this time.

At the age of about sixteen or seventeen the children are ready to be married. Sometimes they are betrothed in infancy, and occasionally a pregnant woman will betroth her child before it is born, conditionally, of course, upon its sex. Once the child is betrothed the ceremony must take place, otherwise the disappointed prospective mate will call down a *kunu*, or curse, on the entire perjured family, and they will all die. The pubescent child does not look forward to marriage as time for leaving its family, nor is marriage an initiation into sex relations. For these two reasons, getting married is not a serious step, and there is little illegitimacy because there is no reason for objecting to a marriage.

Youths must remain standing until their elders invite them to be seated. It is customary for older people to receive much respectful attention, for the older people are the sources of tradition and authority

Djuka

/1/

Introduction

114 After having left the plantation life in the colony of Surinam,
121 I went back there in the beginning of 1851 with the plan, as the
[101] result of an agreement reached by me with a Belgian firm, to send shiploads of wood to the motherland and Belgium.

[123] I undertook my journeys to the Bush Negroes for this purpose and visited most of their dwelling places, something that entailed effort and great cost, since I distributed ample presents everywhere for the purpose of thereby acquiring their confidence, which they do not readily grant to Whites.

123 At my very first encounter I took the precaution of politely
[576] greeting each one of them without distinction and shaking their
[177] hands, a practice taken over by them from the Whites in the most recent times, which assures them of a feeling of good-will such as they experience among themselves but never from a White.

[352] I spoke to them frankly and in a friendly way, sat next to them in their huts on their low stools, and partook of their meals. In short -- I lived for a while without reserve or fear among them, paying amply for everything that I enjoyed in this way or that.

[273] I also permitted them, whenever they wanted to use any of my store of beverages, such as wine, beer, brandy, and gin, to ask me for it quietly, so that I would be able to order my servants to offer them what they had requested. In addition I supplied /2/ them amply with dram (1), herbs, and lead and, in order to show

1. A kind of inland rum (sugar spirits).

generosity to the women as well, frequently gave them and the children biscuits, cake, or some coins.

[121] In the beginning they were very reserved and mistrustful, but gradually, and after some difficult years, became more open with me, so that I, adapting myself entirely to their practices, was able to carry out my plan to have the necessary wood processed by them.

/73 cont./

643 687 That happened especially to people who, summoned to work in the grand man's clearings, carried out their task with ill will.

About 1950, M..., of Papaïston village, had openly revolted against the grand man whom he had refused to conduct to Saint-Laurent. The grand man sentenced him to make a large stairway of planks, from the Boniville wharf to the entrance to the village, giving him an injunction to leave the country if he refused. M... ended by yielding and executed the large stairway which can now be seen at the Boniville wharf.

643 648 292 177 The grand man is constantly concerned about his prestige and dignity; he is almost always dressed in the European manner and in ceremonies wears an impeccable white uniform; the French administration gives him a relatively large salary and, when he comes to Cayenne, he is put up in the hospital in the apartments reserved for officers.

643 [576] To greet the grand man one does not look directly at him but places himself in profile with respect to him.

[644] [357] [466] The grand man has no servants (that would be contrary to the morality of the Refugee Blacks) and leads a very simple life. Still, he does not do any hard manual labor; each year he calls together a certain number of men from each lo to work in his clearings; he does not pay them, for this work is an obligation provided for by custom, but he feeds them heartily.

643 466 Likewise, for his traveling, he requisitions by turns as boatmen two or three of his subjects. Sometimes also he requisitions women to help his wife at harvest time.

On the other hand, for all other work he may need (such as the construction of a large boat) he has to pay like everyone else and he is not given any reduction.

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429 561 861 582 Until very recent times the authority of the guardian had remained very strong and was prolonged very late; he had the right to strike his ward to make him obey, and he exercised his powers until the time when, judging the child's education finished, he authorized him to marry, which formerly seldom happened before 25-27 years.

Fintiman (of Boniville), about 50 years old in 1958, tells that his father, entrusted with his upbringing, did not authorize him to marry before he was completely established as a carpenter and boat-builder, at about the age of 27. Until that age he remained subject to the most tyrannical authority; his father intended especially to forbid him to go out in the evening, and in order to carry on a clandestine affair he had to use nocturnal fishing expeditions as a pretext!

429 884 When a boy's guardian judges his education finished, he helps him to build his house and gives him tools, a trunk containing clothes, and a hammock. Henceforward the boy must make his own way in life.

429 576 601 All during his lifetime he will continue to show the greatest respect to the person who raised him and often, speaking of that person, he will say: "my father" or "my mother."

601 When a Refugee Black says in the course of a conversation, "My father used to do this," he often means the man who brought him up; if he wishes to speak of his true father, he will say, "My own father who made me." Likewise when he says "My grandfather," he usually means a great-uncle. This confusion makes research on family life risky as long as one does not possess any census by names; apparently it has led several authors into error, making them believe that among the Refugee Blacks the father brings up his children himself, when this is on the contrary the exception. 128 114 593

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with repudiation in case of a second offense. The rule is to repudiate her, under pain of ridicule.

In 1951 G..., of Kotika village, was informed that his wife A..., of Asisi village, 25 years old, was deceiving him with a boy of the same age named K.... The first time he encountered K in a village he took issue with him; K... confessed without difficulty. G... delivered a strong punch which threw him to the ground, and that was all. He did not administer any punishment to his wife but immediately let her know that he was repudiating her. Some time after, K... asked to be reconciled with him. He asked his pardon and gave him a bottle of tafia (this is obligatory for reconciliation). Since, the two men have again been friends.

It also happens that the grand man levies a more or less stiff fine on the guilty man.

According to the elders, adultery was rare in former times. If a woman was tired of her husband, she divorced him openly, but she did not deceive him. Nowadays it seems to be rather frequent.

Divorce. The Refugee Blacks divorce each other as easily as they join together; in general it is the woman who decides to break up the union because she finds her husband too poor, too lazy, or simply because she wants to change. /154/

In the case of divorce the woman keeps all that her husband has given to her or made for her (utensils, house, boat), but of course the man keeps all his own belongings; this rupture changes nothing about the possession of property since no object was owned jointly.

The rule is the following: at the time of the marriage the man puts down symbolically several personal objects (fabrics, utensils) in the woman's home. As long as these objects are in her home the marriage remains in force, the wife is held to fidelity or at the very least, if there is adultery, it is regarded as such and entails the sanction related above.

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153 787 791 Possession begins progressively; in the beginning the divinity does not find in its bearer sufficient passivity, it does not succeed well in expressing itself through his mouth, spectators observe only incoherent gestures and hear only unintelligible stammerings. The pupil must continue his training for a long time in order to become a suitable bearer.

789 The god, when it has just entered a man, always begins by rendering homage in its language to Masa Gadu, proclaiming that it acts only in its name and by his will.

[576] [198] Then it greets those present, employing formulas which are the exact transposition into its language of the ordinary Boni formulas of politeness; that even if it is getting ready to speak to them in the harshest manner.

The god speaks then in its language, saying not very intelligible things to the audience that appear to be related to what goes on in its country, to its family (for it is believed that these lower gods have a family). Finally, it begins to speak in ordinary language in order to be understood by those present, and answers questions.

796 787 825 Various categories of gods capable of bringing on possession. The Refugee Blacks assume that four categories of lower gods exist:

The first category consists of a series of gods which present themselves to men under very different aspects but which are nevertheless felt to be of the same nature. All speak the Kumenti language, all are well disposed toward men and do not exercise against them the kunu, that is, the curse;

--The Kumenti, which have the appearance of jaguars and live in the bush;

--The Djadja, which have the appearance of ocelots;

--The Opete, which have the appearance of the urubu and which reside in the air;

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776 character, touchy and vindictive. In speaking of them one
[576] says Papa gadu (papa does not mean "father"; it is a term of respect used for important personages (2)). They are believed

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2. This is the interpretation given by the Refugee Blacks. However, 18th-century documents on the origin of the slaves draw attention to the existence of an African tribe called Papa. Allusions contained in documents of the archives of Surinam, recently studied by Madame Silvia W. de Groot, would tend to identify the Papa with one of the populations of present-day Dahomey. In this hypothesis, the cult of the papa gadu would represent an archaic form of the Dahomey cult of the snake gods.

776 they are believed
[825] to have as habitual bearers the boa snakes (dagowe) (3) which

3. This word appears to be the deformation of the Dahomey word dāgbe.

are not to be confused with the great water snakes (anaconda)
[824] that the Refugee Blacks call mboma sineki. They may also reside in silk-cotton trees (kankan tree) and in the trees called katu udu (Bombax surinamiensis).

[787] The Vɔɔdū which incarnate themselves in humans may be of either sex; if a male god is concerned, it is called "tata vɔɔdū."

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152 828 754 777 Jealousy. To speak of jealousy as a negative magic force is not to be false to the thought of the Refugee Blacks. They regard it as an attenuated force of wisi, capable of bringing misfortunes even if no sorcery has been formulated. Jealousy is 152 157 very marked in their character, associated with an individualism verging on asocial tendencies. When somebody is accused of 754 wisi, jealousy is the commonest explanation of the crimes 152 828 attributed to him; it is thought for example that a man can be jealous of his brother's growing rich to the point of making him die; that a woman may be jealous of the beauty or health of 152 her sister's children. Not laying themselves open to jealousy 156 828 is the constant preoccupation of the Refugee Blacks; one observes it in daily behavior, for example in the greetings which 576 they exchange on the river. They never say, "I am well," but: "I feel only fair." If they come back from hunting they say, "I found a little."

152 156 828 [182] [463] Examples are not lacking of people who avoid building a fine house or buying an outboard motor in order not to give cause for jealousy. This preoccupation has profound repercussions on the material life and the economy of the Refugee Blacks; it explains in particular the absence of specialized professions and trade among them.

[183] [571] Many aspects of the customary law of the Refugee Blacks have no other function than to exorcise, if one may say so, tendencies toward jealousy and selfishness which, if they were given free rein, would poison the life of the collectivity.

76 181 725 828 The rites of death and mourning, which we have shown to constitute the pivot of the social life of the Refugee Blacks, are entirely based on the idea of preserving the surviving spouse from the effect of the jealousy of the deceased.

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*539 No way to catch the rabbit again! The rabbit saw an agouti which had been dead for a whole week, all swollen up and stinking. He slipped into his belly. He began to groan. The jaguar came; he stopped and said: "Brother agouti, good day!" He replied: "How are you?" -- "Only fair." (1) The jaguar said: "Noble

• [576]

1. Common formulas of greeting of the Refugee Blacks.

brother, what happened to you?" He said: "The rabbit and I fought, he gave me one single blow, and here I am stretched out dead; that is what he did to me."

The jaguar went on his way. He saw the rabbit in front of him, he said: "Today we meet." They ran until... the rabbit escaped. He saw the cadaver of a deer, dead for a week, swollen and stinking. He slipped inside. The jaguar ran until he arrived there. He said: "Brother deer, what happened to you?" He answered: "The rabbit and I quarreled, we fought, then he gave me one single blow and here I am stretched out dead."

The jaguar said: "(I give up.) I and the rabbit, this is the end until the end of the world."

6) Anansi and Death

(One day) Anansi went hunting. He walked until he came out into a large glade. He went ahead until he met a man. He greeted him and said: "Good day, brother!" No answer! -- "Good day, brother!" Nothing; no answer! He said to him: "Hem! Brother! That's meat you have there?" No answer! He said to him: "Since you don't answer me, (it is as though) you were saying to help myself." Comrades, Anansi went up to the cooking-pot and he ate, ate until his belly was full.